

**CIAP Proposal
To
State of Louisiana
May 22, 2006**

**Submitted by:
Environmental Defense
National Wildlife Federation
National Audubon Society
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**

1. Project Title: Southeastern Louisiana Coastal Restoration
2. Entity/Individual nominating the project: Environmental Defense, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
3. Contact Information (Name, Address, Telephone, Email):

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4. Total CIAP Funds Requested: \$540 Million
5. Infrastructure Funds Proposed:
6. Description and Location of Projects:

While we are all searching for the right mechanism to provide billions of dollars for a Louisiana coastal wetland restoration program, it is critical that the State spend well the funds that Congress is already providing through CIAP, emergency supplemental appropriations, the Breaux Act and any other sources. The CIAP funds alone come to \$540 million over four years. Emergency supplemental appropriations may provide \$100 to \$200 million more. Additional funds may become available through general appropriations, subject to project authorizations in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Combined with annual Breaux Act funds, Louisiana could be receiving close to \$1 billion over the next four years.

As restoration funding becomes available to Louisiana, members of Congress, key federal executive and White House agencies, and national environmental organizations, among others, will be paying close attention to how effectively these dollars are spent. In our view, these funds should be committed to the final design and construction of a limited number of projects that could produce regionally significant restoration results, rather than be dissipated on many small, Breaux Act-type projects. Specifically, we recommend that these funds be used to support significant sediment diversion, sediment pipeline or barrier island restoration projects, as well as a couple of critical studies. The State must show national interests that the process for selecting restoration initiatives, as well as the initiatives themselves, advance a restoration plan for coastal Louisiana that is comprehensive and that, in the post-Katrina, post-Rita context, will serve major storm buffer, ecological, and water-quality purposes. We urge the State to treat the combined CIAP and other near-term federal funding as a pilot project for planning and implementation that demonstrates what the State could do with a more robust, predictable, long-term funding source.

We recognize that the federal oversight role varies with the available funding sources. Under CIAP, the Department of Interior has the lead federal role; for WRDA-authorized projects, the Corps plays that role. However, CIAP offers the State an opportunity to begin a purposeful integration of these different federal-state initiatives, and to develop a governance structure for planning, implementation, and ongoing assessment that produces real restoration outcomes and achieves ambitious restoration goals for the State, its federal partners (the Corps, Interior, EPA and NOAA), and non-government stakeholders. The State could play a vital role in helping Interior and the Corps to develop the kind of joint leadership role that will be essential if large-scale restoration of coastal Louisiana with a secure source of funding is to become a reality.

We understand that DNR is now taking nominations for projects that could qualify for CIAP funding. The restoration projects described below represent the kinds of projects we believe the State should pursue to demonstrate its commitment to a productive, long-term relationship with federal partners and to show the synergistic relationship among various restoration efforts. This list includes some projects identified in the LCA Ecosystem Restoration program, but modified or enlarged to comport with a more aggressive, post-Katrina wetlands restoration agenda. They also embody two principles we regard as essential to successful restoration. First, projects should use renewable sources of sediment (i.e. sediment that would otherwise be channeled offshore)--delivered via pipeline or otherwise deliberately deposited--to build land, and employ freshwater diversions to nourish and sustain the new and adjacent landscape over time. Second, barrier island restoration projects should be strategically located near sources of sediment renewal. With these principles in mind, we propose that CIAP and other available funds be used for the following:

- The Myrtle Grove sediment diversion project with a capacity of 15,000 to 25,000 cfs. This would provide freshwater and sediment at a critical part of the Barataria Basin.
- A sediment pipeline project in conjunction with the Myrtle Grove diversion that could demonstrate the potential for this technology to compensate for multi-decade sediment gaps. Since the freshwater footprint of the Myrtle Grove diversion is larger than the sediment footprint, we would envision a sediment pipeline conveyance expanding that sediment footprint to be more coterminous with the freshwater footprint. In addition, the pipeline could be used to plug and backfill abandoned canals in this region of the Barataria Basin.
- A variety of diversion features to the east of the Mississippi River to restore the forested wetlands and other wetlands in the Lake Borgne region affected by MRGO, which is to be closed as a deep

water navigation channel. This project could include a robust diversion at Violet and/or diversions into the GIWW or MRGO itself.

- An accelerated feasibility-type study of the Mississippi River Delta Management Plan with a major diversion below Empire to the west and a slack water channel to assure efficient navigation. Sediment transferred across the coastal boundary zone at this point could provide a sustainable source of sediment for barrier islands along the central coast, and would support diversion structures affecting the central part of the coast, which has experienced high rates of subsidence and erosion. It is time to start planning and then implementing this mega-project to demonstrate the capacity to rebuild a basic coastal framework that would entail abandoning the birdfoot delta and thus preventing the loss of massive amounts of sediment to the continental shelf. This project would complement effectively the Myrtle Grove and MRGO restoration features further up the River.
- The Caminada Headlands barrier island restoration project, as described in the LCA report. The location of this project, close to a source of sediment from the mouth of the River, makes it an appropriate candidate for restoration.
- A Bayou Lafourche diversion project with a capacity of 4,000 cfs, augmented by a moderate new sediment supply (delivered using pipeline technology) to recover recent land loss. Increasing the capacity of this diversion to a level that the existing channel, perhaps with some dredging, could accommodate on a pulsed basis, offers a means of transporting some freshwater and sediment into the central coast. With the piped sediment in place, the 4000 cfs diversion will nourish the newly restored land.
- Accelerated scoping of and detailed design work on an Atchafalaya Basin third outlet as proposed in Paul Kemp's East Atchafalaya Restoration Spillway draft report. This project is part of a broad strategy for delivering large amounts of sediment to the central coast. As planning proceeds with this new approach to beneficial use of Atchafalaya Basin water and sediment to support wetland restoration to the east, and later to the west along the Chenier Plain, both the State and federal agencies should rethink the operation of the Old River Control Structure to serve environmental restoration goals.
- A Hope Canal project of 4,000 to 5,000 cfs capacity as the initial part of a strategy, along with the Violet diversion mentioned above, to start bringing back coastal forests. It is important to note that rejuvenated coastal swamp forests in the Maurepas Basin area would provide important storm buffer functions to petrochemical facilities and communities to the north.

We add that, in our view, freshwater diversions east of the River at and around Violet, coupled with closure of MRGO and a robust Hope Canal project, would provide more freshwater benefits for the Biloxi marshes than other diversions into Lake Pontchartrain. And this aggressive restoration strategy could replace coastal forested wetlands in this region, contributing significantly to coastal protection.

Cost estimates for most of these projects are set forth in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' October 2003 (unpublished) draft and the November 2004 final LCA Ecosystem Restoration Study, although the recommended modifications could increase costs somewhat. We estimate the cost of feasibility-type studies of the two large-scale diversion projects involving the lower Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya River to be about \$15 million each.

These are examples of restoration initiatives that could excite the country, project a compelling restoration vision, and convince Congress that the state of Louisiana is intent on carrying out the challenge of coastal restoration and protection effectively with whatever resources are provided.

To assist in this grand enterprise, we would urge the State to establish an advisory group made up of key federal and state agency policy leaders, scientists, and a limited number of national and state environmental and business representatives interested in coastal restoration. Such a group could provide ideas and feedback, raise pertinent questions, and build invaluable public and political support for the restoration effort. We would be happy to participate in such an effort.

7. Project Type (from list below of authorized CIAP fund uses):

Conservation, restoration and protection of coastal area, including wetland.

8. Project Justification:

In our view, these funds should be committed to the final design and construction of a limited number of projects that could produce regionally significant restoration results, rather than be dissipated on many small, Breaux Act-type projects.

9. Project cost share (Types and amounts of non-CIAP funds proposed, if any): To be determined.

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